

Remarks, as prepared,
U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration - Samuel R.
Witten
Jalazone Refugee Camp
February 26, 2008

Thank you, Shukran. Commissioner General Abu Zayd, I am very pleased to be here today with you and your dedicated staff at Jalazone Camp. I am also happy to see the newly refurbished Jalazone clinic, which was recently funded by the U.S. Government and now provides Jalazone residents with vastly improved facilities and medical care.

The United States Government is committed to helping meet the needs of the Palestinian people. In addition to my government's ongoing efforts to support the creation of a Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel, we recognize the necessity of continuing to support ordinary Palestinians, many of whom continue to face severe hardships in their daily lives. The United States partnership with UNRWA is longstanding and strong; it is but one example of America's commitment to the welfare of the Palestinian people.

The United States has always been the largest bilateral contributor to UNRWA. Last month, State Department Under Secretary Nicholas Burns announced a \$40 million contribution towards UNRWA's General Fund Appeal, which supports its health, education, relief and social services and livelihood programs for 4.5 million Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. We expect to make additional contributions to the General Fund as well as to the emergency appeal for West Bank and Gaza as we have in previous years.

The U.S. government's contributions to UNRWA supports programs educating nearly 500,000 children in more than 650 schools. It supports one hospital and more than 125 clinics. Two hundred and fifty thousand of the poorest Palestinians receive emergency food supplies, shelter, and financial support.

Earlier today, I met with UNRWA's Commissioner-General Karen Abu Zayd and the directors of the Agency's West Bank and Gaza field offices.

They described the challenges UNRWA staff face every day and the enormous dedication of their staff. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Commissioner General and her staff for their exemplary work—often at great personal risk--on behalf of Palestinian refugees.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to urge the international community--both traditional and non-traditional donors--to support UNRWA's critical activities. The needs are great and the stakes are high. The United States is committed to continuing our longstanding partnership with UNRWA, and we look forward to continuing our cooperation in support of Palestinian refugees.

Thank you for hosting me here and thank you for the very warm welcome my colleagues and I have received. Our visit here to Jalazone has been a unforgettable.

